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HOMELESSNESS

DEBATING CIVIL COMMITMENTS

Elizabeth Batts has pages of photos of her daughter, Karen, in happier years. Karen Batts died of hypothermia in a Portland parking garage on Jan. 7. Her mother says Karen had schizophrenia. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

As winter settles in, officials grapple with balancing mentally ill people's rights, safety

Molly Harbarger *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

Winter can be lethal to people without shelter. Last year in Portland, the combination of homelessness, freezing temperatures and mental illness took four lives.

As temperatures drop and the wind chill sharpens, debates are reigniting over how best to balance the civil liberties and safety of people whose mental conditions render them unable to make good decisions.

In Oregon, with a population of 4 million, about 600 people are required to receive treatment for mental illness against their will each year. That is a low rate compared with other states. Oregon and Maryland are generally considered to have the vaguest laws governing when police and judges are allowed to commit someone to a mental health treatment facility against the person's will. In lieu of a clear definition, the Oregon Court of Appeals has crafted rulings that have narrowed the circumstances in which involuntary hospitalization is allowed.

A work group of judges, mental health advocates, police and state lawmakers is trying to revise those rules to allow officials the latitude

SEE HOMELESS, A8

Homeless deaths

In 2016, at least 80 people died on the streets of Portland, a new report says. While 99.5 percent of Multnomah County residents have homes, deaths of people who lack shelter account for more than 8 percent of the county's unexpected, violent or suspicious deaths.

Read more about the new report on page A8.

OREGON LEGISLATURE

Out-of-state group seeks to oust Courtney

Gordon R. Friedman *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

A deep-pocketed California group that dislikes the Electoral College system has spent nearly $100,000 this year going after a nemesis: Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney.

Since 2007, Courtney has single-handedly killed every attempt to add Oregon to the list of states that have agreed to circumvent the Electoral College system by pledging their delegates to the winner of the national popular vote.

So the nonprofit political group National Popular Vote is creating anti-Courtney ads and spreading them in the senator's district, which spans Salem and Woodburn. The ads — in English and Spanish — have been distributed via direct mail, billboards, cable television and the internet, campaign finance records show.

The ads paint Courtney, 74, as out of touch not only on the national popular vote issue but also on tenant protections and environmental policy. They also fault him for taking campaign contributions from tobacco companies.

Courtney was not available to answer questions, a campaign spokeswoman said. In a statement she provided, Courtney said Oregon voters should decide whether to subvert the Electoral College. Courtney's statement also said he would support such a proposal if it passes out of committee next year.

SEE COURTNEY, A9

PLANETARY SCIENCE

AI finds solar system the size of ours

Only a handful of star systems have more than a single planet. With eight worlds, our solar system has long taken the prize for the biggest lineup. But no longer.

The system: The star is known as Kepler 90, and it is 2,545 light-years away. It's the first found to be orbited by eight planets, the same as our own system. The discovery that completed the octet was planet Kepler-90i, which like the Earth is the third rock from its sun. But it's much closer to its sun — orbiting in just 14 days — and is a scorching 800 degrees at the surface.

Rise of the machines: The planet was found by a Google algorithm using data from the Kepler Space Telescope on changes in stellar brightness — the subtle, fleeting dip when a planet passes in front of a star. It's believed to be the first time an artificial network has been used to find a new world.

Expanding universe: In all, more than 3,560 planets outside our own solar system have been confirmed, with another approximately 4,500 candidates awaiting verification.

Inside: Read more on page A9.

NATION

FCC overturns net neutrality

The GOP-controlled agency kills the rules that required all web traffic to be treated equally. **A10**

SPORTS

Freeman won't play in Vegas

Coach Mario Cristobal confirms senior running back Royce Freeman will sit out the bowl game. **B1**

A&E

'Jedi' returns at long last

Find our review of "The Last Jedi," the latest Star Wars installment, as well as a few cast secrets. **A&E8**

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